**Developmental psychology**

**Introduction**

Developmental psychology is the study of how and why people change over time in the way they behave, think, and relate to others. Developmental psychology focuses on developmental themes such as identity, attachment and adolescence.

It is important to gain an understanding of the extent to which early experience may influence later development and if there are critical periods in development. Knowledge about the influence of biological, social and cultural factors in people’s lives is helpful not only for families but also in childcare and education to create good opportunities for children and young people all over the world.

Controversies related to developmental psychology include the extent of the impact of early experiences and why some children seem to be more resilient than others after stressful experiences in childhood. In recent years knowledge about resilience has been used to develop programs that can increase resilience.

**Learning outcomes**

**General framework (applicable to all topics in the option)**

* To what extent do biological, cognitive and sociocultural factors influence human development?
* Evaluate psychological research (that is, theories and/or studies) relevant to developmental psychology.

**Cognitive development**

* Evaluate theories of cognitive development (for example, Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsky, brain development theories).
* Discuss how social and environmental variables (for example, parenting, educational environment, poverty, diet) may affect cognitive development.

**Social development**

* Examine attachment in childhood and its role in the subsequent formation of relationships.
* Discuss potential effects of deprivation or trauma in childhood on later development.
* Define resilience.
* Discuss strategies to build resilience.

**Identity development**

* Discuss the formation and development of gender roles.
* Explain cultural variations in gender roles.
* Describe adolescence.
* Discuss the relationship between physical change and development of identity during adolescence.
* Examine psychological research into adolescence (for example, Erikson’s identity crisis, Marcia).